Rising as it does out of the old Quarry, the Boole Library provides an architecturally engaging, yet harmonious, fourth side to the UCC Quadrangle. It has been interesting to watch, over the last ten years, how the building and the area around have altogether formed a new centre of College student life. However, the Library, like all College service providers, has been developing and changing rapidly in recent years, particularly in the area of computerisation.

From inside the building, the only immediate evidence of library automation is the range of terminals to the Online Public Access Catalogue which are dotted around the building and at the Circulation Desk. But closer investigation reveals that a lot more is happening in this area and that the Library is planning some exciting new computerised services for the near future.

THE ONLINE CATALOGUE
A university's library catalogue is the single most important research document available to its staff and students. UCC's catalogue is maintained on a mainframe computer (kept in ship-shape by Celine Doyle, Data Processing Assistant) which sits in a custom-fitted room at the centre of Q floor and is accessible via 25 public terminals and 40 staff and service terminals. The system tracks each item in the Library's collection throughout its life-cycle, from ordering to acquisition to cataloguing to circulation, thus acting as a reliable and efficient support to the daily work of staff in practically every area.

The system, called DOBIS/LIBIS, also manages the loan transactions of over 10,000 borrowers, with Circulation Desk staff exploiting the latest technology by using laser scanners to read bar-codes attached to I.D cards and books, just like at the checkout of your local supermarket.

A relatively recent development has been to make the online catalogue available to anyone linked to the College network. This eliminates the need to walk across campus in the rain just to check if a book is in the Library, or indeed to check your Library account to see what you've got out on loan at the moment. This advance has also meant that anybody anywhere in the world who is linked to the rapidly expanding global academic network, the INTERNET, can dial in to our catalogue and use it.

A feature of UCC's catalogue is that it allow users to send electronic mail messages to Library staff. Quite often, messages are received from satisfied users in Australia and the United States who have browsed through our catalogue from afar.

CD-ROM
One of the most interesting and popular of recent developments in the Library's computerised services, however, must be the provision of access to research tools and material on Compact Disk-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM). Currently, there are seven "CD Stations" spread throughout the Boole Library and Regional Hospital Medical Library: at these stations reference works, indexes, dictionaries, and full-text material are available on CD at the touch of a button. Searching through the traditional printed versions is a comparatively slow process, but with the electronic version searches can be carried out over vast quantities of data in seconds and the search results printed off or stored on the user's floppy disk.

A sample of the list of titles available on CD makes interesting reading: the All England Law Reports, the Oxford English Dictionary, Social Sciences Citation Index, Psychological Abstracts, Corpus Christianorum, UK Official Publications, INSPEC, Medline, the Music Index, Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts, etc., etc...! For obvious reasons, research staff and postgraduate students are particularly heavy CD-ROM users.

COLLEGE NETWORK
The College network was extended to the Library two years ago. Since then, Library staff have been exploiting network facilities such as Electronic mail (Email). This facility has proved particularly useful in relation to the two off-site Library units, the Regional Hospital Medical Library and the new Library Store, the latter having been established in a refurbished Cooperage building on the Irish Distillers site, off the North Mall.

Right now, work is commencing on connecting Library staff PCs to an electronic scheduler, which will allow access to a common diary, making it easy for anybody to see when staff are available for meetings and other events.

THE INTERNET
The network has also allowed staff to begin to get a feel for the exciting and rich resources of the INTERNET. The INTERNET links major global
FORMATION AGE

Today, an Information Technology Revolution is in full swing, keeping pace with the latest developments in College library services.

“sherpa” increases, librarians will quickly add the INTERNET to the repertory of sources worth consulting on a regular basis.

A feature of the INTERNET that has been particularly interesting to watch has been the increasing numbers of commercial and industrial organisations which have decided to link in to the network. In the US this sector has already been identified as a market for tailored information services provided by academic libraries. Perhaps there is an opening for the UCC Library to provide a similar service to Irish companies?

INTER-LIBRARY LOANS

Inter-Library Loans (ILL) is an area not closely associated by many with computerisation. Yet those who do regularly use this service will have noticed staff members Jill Lacey and Phil O'Sullivan busily taping the keyboards of their recently installed ILL control system. Each afternoon, all of the ILL requests handed in during the day are transmitted electronically to the British Library Document Supply Centre in the UK. This centre, which holds tens of millions of items, quickly locates the book or article requested and quite often dispatches the item by evening post on its way to UCC! The improvement in turnaround time is a great boost to the increasing body of Library users for whom speed of delivery is critical to the value of the information they require. Naturally, users look forward to the day when they can input their ILL requests from their own PCs, and receive the items they've requested electronically.

While Library staff are fully behind planning and implementing progress of this kind, publishers in particular are extremely reluctant to allow electronic copying or transmission of their publications. Gradually, however, due to market pull, more and more publishers are accepting that electronic delivery of books and journals is what their readers require. So, the prospect of receiving the article you requested as a file in your electronic mailbox may not be too far away.

THE FUTURE

The Computer Centre and I work very closely together in planning, implementing, and developing the Library's computerised services. Jerry Buckley and Roy Cummins of the Centre are members of the Library's IT Strategy Team, which meets regularly to monitor, discuss, and advise the Library in its work in this area. A new service due to “go live” this month will provide access to CD-ROMs, including some of those listed above, via the College network. This will mean that, as is the case with accessing the Library catalogue over the network, users may consult CDs from their own desktop, provided they have a line to the Computer Centre! Further details of this new service will appear on next month’s Courier.

A major ongoing project is to plan and prepare for a replacement or upgrading of the ageing DOBIS/LIBIS system, so that the College can exploit the benefits and cost savings of the new technologies. The ability to use Email to transmit overdue notices to borrowers, receipt acknowledgements to academic staff, and purchase orders to book sellers are all within the competence of the newer library systems. Many on the market also allow users to view scanned images of texts and download catalogue searches ready for use in popular word-processing systems. A common feature of most newer systems is a facility allowing display of information of interest to all sectors of College. This could include course reading lists, an events diary, restaurant menu, news from the faculties, changes in timetables/schedules, lost and found, service opening hours ... the possibilities are endless.

THE TEACHING LIBRARY

In many universities, information handling is taught by library personnel. UCC’s Library has a particularly strong reputation for excellent user education and liaison. The Library of.../continued on page 6
The Centre for European Social Research (CESR) was set up at UCC in 1988 to specialise in professional social scientific research. Now, however, the CESR has established itself as a national initiative in social science, obtaining a research budget in excess of £1m, and winning international recognition as the leader or partner in nine EC projects.

At present, the CESR's pan-European network of contacts embraces 30 partners in 13 countries. Its particular areas of competence include the social scientific study of innovation, technology, and the environment; it also specialises in comparative research and in research methodology.

Within UCC, the CESR constitutes a resource from which other departments can benefit. As the centre’s Co-Directors, Mr Piet Strydom and Dr Pat O’Mahony, and Manager, Mr Seamus O’Tuama, explain, there is nowadays increasing recognition of the need for social scientific research expertise in a wide variety of disciplines, such as commerce, medicine, engineering, and electronics.

The arrival of the CESR opens up new possibilities for research across the multi-disciplinary breadth of UCC which has not been traditionally available here. A professional social scientific research centre of this scale with nine full-time researchers, an administrative and technological infrastructure, and a Europe-wide network places a resource at the disposal of UCC which no other Irish and few European universities can match. It makes possible the foundation of on-campus research consortia hitherto impossible.

Thus far, the CESR has collaborated with the NMRC and with Civil and Environmental Engineering, and has also developed links with the Commerce Faculty, through the EC Human Capital and Mobility programme. A number of new proposals have been initiated with departments within the Arts Faculty, and in recent times there have been some tentative, but interesting contacts with the Medical and Science Faculties.

Given that the tradition of research in this field has placed strong emphasis on economic questions, the CESR, says Dr O’Mahony, will place a counterbalancing emphasis on social questions. Ultimately, the CESR, which is politically independent, is intended to become a “democratic catalyst”. Its research programmes will eventually address a wide range of non-traditional topics, including gender issues, popular mobilisation on environmental issues, and the education system itself.